



## Fact Sheet

### **Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging National Recognition Program**

**What is the National Recognition Program for Communities that Combine Smart Growth & Active Aging?** The principal goal of the “Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging” program is to raise awareness across the nation about healthy synergies that can be achieved by communities combining Smart Growth and Active Aging concepts. The U.S. EPA’s Aging Initiative will spearhead a multi-agency effort conceived and developed in partnership with:

- The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC
- The National Council on Aging’s Center for Healthy Aging
- The National Blueprint Office
- Active for Life

Additionally, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through its Active for Life program, will support a Healthy Communities for Active Aging Learning Network for participating communities and tribes and the National Blueprint and the CDC Healthy Aging Research Network will provide technical assistance.

**What is Smart Growth?** Smart Growth is characterized by development patterns that create attractive, distinctive, walkable communities that give people of varying age, wealth, and physical ability a range of safe, affordable, convenient choices in where they live and how they get around. Growing smart also ensures that existing resources are used efficiently and that lands and buildings that shape communities are preserved.

Communities across the country are using creative strategies to develop in ways that preserve natural lands and critical environmental areas, protect water and air quality and reuse previously developed land. They conserve resources by reinvesting in existing infrastructure and reclaiming historic buildings. By designing neighborhoods to contain homes, shops, offices, parks, and other amenities, these communities are giving their residents and visitors the option of walking, bicycling, taking public transportation, or driving as they go about their business. A range of different types of homes makes it possible for aging Americans to stay in their homes as they

age, young people to afford their first homes and families, at all stages in between, to find a safe and attractive home they can afford. Through smart growth approaches that enhance neighborhoods and involve local citizens in development decisions, these communities are creating vibrant places to live, work, and play. The high quality of life in these communities makes them economically competitive, creates business opportunities, and improves the local tax base. For more information see: <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth>.

**What is Active Aging?** Active Aging takes place when older adults regularly participate in a variety of structured and unstructured physical activities. Communities can promote Active Aging by implementing a diverse array of accessible physical-activity programs, and helping to make more accessible self-directed physical-activity opportunities for those 60-plus. All of these opportunities should emphasize activities that increase endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance, while adhering to the principles of injury prevention. Self-directed activities include walking, biking, fitness trails and similar activities that are appropriate for participants at various levels of fitness and functional ability. For more information on Active Aging, please visit the websites of the Active for Life Program at <http://www.activeforlife.info>, National Council on Aging's Center for Healthy Aging at: <http://www.healthyagingprograms.org> and the National Blueprint at <http://www.agingblueprint.org>.

**What is the Goal of the Recognition Program?** The goal of the Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging recognition program is to raise awareness about and promote community development responsive to the principles of Smart Growth and Active Aging for older adults.

**What is the Benefit for a Community or Tribe participating in the Program?** While the details of the Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging recognition program still are being developed, it is expected that communities and tribes participating in the program will receive documentation recognizing their achievements. Program sponsors anticipate a major event each year to honor those communities achieving the highest levels of Smart Growth/Active Aging development. The Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging website will post descriptions of each community's achievements in this area. In addition, participating communities will be eligible to participate in a virtual learning network that will provide a forum for sharing lessons learned.

## **Help Shape the Future for Communities and Older Adults**



**For more information on  
the EPA Aging Initiative: [www.epa.gov/aging](http://www.epa.gov/aging)**

**Questions? [aging.info@epa.gov](mailto:aging.info@epa.gov)**